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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS
NSC FOR JWOOD
OSD FOR MCGRAW
CG CJTF-82, POLAD, JICCENT

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [AF](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: DOSTUM LEAVES FOR TURKEY

REF: A. KABUL 2856
[1](#)B. KABUL 3028

[1](#)1. (SBU) Gen. Abdul Rashid Dostum departed Afghanistan for Turkey this week, following a reconciliation ceremony last month with a political rival and a brief, but notable return to public life (ref A). Dostum had been living under a loose form of house arrest after a violent altercation in February. The clash was the latest in a series of embarrassing incidents that led many in the Afghan government and Dostum's predominately ethnic Uzbek Junbesh-e-Milli party to seek a quiet, honorable exit from the country's politics for the warlord.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Turkish government, long a patron of Dostum's, had waffled between facilitating Dostum's exit and maintaining their influence in "Afghan Turk" communities via the powerful military leader. Turkish Embassy Political Counselor Erdogan Odabas said Dostum had finally agreed to make the trip after heavy lobbying by the Turkish government. Dostum will stay with family in Ankara and may seek medical treatment for alcoholism. Odabas told us on Dec. 2 he expected Dostum to stay for several months, but conceded Dostum may push to return to Afghanistan before next year's presidential election. He said Turkey will try to convince the general to stay as long as possible.

[1](#)3. (SBU) In between his Oct. 26 reconciliation with Akbar Bai and this week's flight to Turkey, Dostum made a series of brief public appearances and publicized the ongoing voter registration process with commercials on his Aina television network (ref B). The pro-government tone of his appearances led many to suspect Karzai's reconciliation initiative and subsequent canceling of Dostum's house arrest came after Dostum agreed to support Karzai's re-election. Junbesh and Palace sources deny a specific deal was made, but some opposition United Front officials say they are no longer counting on Dostum to rally Uzbek voters for their presidential candidate next year.

[1](#)4. (SBU) Dostum's departure leaves a gap in Junbesh's leadership. Lower House MP Shakar Kargar (Faryab, Uzbek) said Dostum had left him in charge of political affairs and designated Junbesh Chairman Sayed Noorullah to handle the party's administrative issues. However, at least one other Junbesh MP, Rahman Oghly (Faryab, Uzbek), disputed Kargar's claim to Dostum's endorsement.
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